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General Doubts G.I. Role in Salvador

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WASHINGTON, Aug. 1 — The commander of United States military forces in Latin America said today that he "could foresee no circumstances when it would be useful" to commit American troops to combat in El Salvador.

The commander, Gen. Paul F. Gorman, told a House subcommittee: "The Salvadorans can protect their own Government if they are provided with resources by the United States. United States forces cannot protect the Government of El Salvador."

He said it would be a mistake for the United States to use combat forces in El Salvador even if the Salvadoran Government appeared to be in danger of being overthrown by guerrillas.

The arrival of American forces, he said, would likely "transform the conflict from an indigenous struggle into a very different kind of fighting in which nationalism might cut against the United States."

'A Very Historic Burden'

"We carry a very historic burden in that region and for the United States to send troops to fight could very well precipitate the kind of events we are trying to foreclose," General Gorman, the senior officer of the United States Southern Command, based in Panama, told the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee on Latin America.

He said he would like to increase the number of American military advisers in El Salvador from the current limit of 55 to 125, a recommendation he made a year ago that was turned down by the White House as too risky politically.

Since assuming command in Panama last year, General Gorman has been a key architect of the Reagan Administration's military buildup in Central America, including the use of large-scale exercises to intimidate Nicaragua, according to senior Administration officials.

He told the subcommittee that if Congress approved the level of military assistance for El Salvador that the White House has requested, the Salvadoran military could have 80 to 90 percent of the country under its control within two years.

General Gorman described the current military situation in El Salvador as slightly favoring the Government forces, but noted that the Salvadoran military, while steadily improving, was still producing "a checkered performance" in which "minor tactical debacles abound."

Attempt to Increase Aid Defeated

The subcommittee later held a closed session to receive a briefing from General Gorman in which, Defense Department officials said, the general showed the lawmakers classified photographs and other intelligence information that demonstrated that Nicaragua was

providing a steady flow of weapons and ammunition to Salvadoran guerrillas.

Moments after General Gorman spoke, Representative Jack F. Kemp, Republican of New York, was ruled out of order in the House when he tried to amend a supplemental appropriations bill for the fiscal year 1984 to provide El Salvador with \$116 million in additional military aid.

The ruling had the effect of eliminating Administration hopes of obtaining the extra money for El Salvador.

Earlier, Representative Clarence D. Long, Democrat of Maryland, the chairman of the House Appropriations subcommittee on foreign operations, said he would recommend making some military and economic aid to El Salvador in 1985 conditional on the observance of human rights there.

Mr. Long, who said on Monday that he would approve almost all of the economic and military aid requested for El Salvador in 1985, told reporters today that he would support a proposal to delay final approval of half of the assistance for six months to insure that Congress could retain some control over the aid.

Mr. Long said on Monday that he would support the Administration aid request because he thought José Napoleón Duarte, who was elected President of El Salvador in May, deserved a chance to establish democratic rule.